

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

An instrument for distracting at least two adjacent vertebrae and/or retaining them in a spaced apart position. Anchor screws are secured to the adjacent vertebrae and tubes of a retainer-distracter instrument frame are slid down over the anchor screws, after which the anchor screws are positively secured to the tubes of the frame. The frame includes a structure for moving the arms and hence the anchor screws and vertebrae toward and away from each other. According to a method of operation, after the anchor screws and frame are attached, a separate distracter distracts the vertebrae away from each other, whereupon the instrument acts only as a retainer to hold the vertebrae apart.